



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23
Network Update
September 2010
www.visn23.va.gov



Have you recently returned from military service?

If you've served, you've earned benefits. Now is the time to take advantage of the benefits VA offers OEF/OIF Veterans. Please do so NOW!

Here are just a few of the programs VA offers:

5 Years of Cost Free Health Care

— Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom OEF/OIF combat Veterans can receive cost free medical care for any condition related to their service in the Iraq/Afghanistan theater for five years after the date of their discharge or release. In order to take advantage of these benefits, OEF/OIF Vets need to enroll in VA's health care system. [Don't delay!](#)

180 Day Dental Benefit

— OEF/OIF Combat Veterans may be eligible for one-time dental care — but you must apply within 180 days of your separation date from active duty.

Find Family Support at Vet Centers

— If you have served in ANY combat zone, [local Vet Centers](#) can help you and your family with readjustment counseling and outreach services — for free.

For more information about VA services or benefits log on at <http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

Janet Murphy Named Network Director

[Janet P. Murphy, MBA](#), has been appointed as Network Director for the VA Midwest Health Care Network – Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23 effective August 29, 2010. Ms. Murphy joined VA in 2001 and was appointed Director, VISN 23 Primary and Specialty Medicine Service Line. She has over 25 years of health care leadership experience. She graduated cum laude from San Francisco State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Health Science and Spanish. Her interests in health care financing and economics prompted her to return to San Francisco State University to complete graduate studies in Business Administration with a dual concentration in Business Analysis and Marketing. Ms. Murphy has extensive knowledge of VA and VISN 23. Under her guidance and strong vision, VISN 23 will continue its mission of honoring America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well being. If you would like to contact Ms. Murphy she can be reached at 612-725-1968.

VA Publishes Final Regulation to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange

Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to access quality health care and qualify for disability compensation under a final regulation that was published on August 31, 2010 in the Federal Register by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The new rule expands the list of health problems VA will presume to be related to Agent Orange. VA is adding Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease and expanding chronic lymphocytic leukemia to include all chronic B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia. This historic regulation is subject to provisions of the Congressional Review Act that require a 60-day Congressional review period before implementation. After the review period, VA can begin paying benefits for new claims and may award benefits retroactively for earlier periods. For new claims, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the effective date of the regulation or to one year before the date VA receives the application, whichever is later. For pending claims and claims that were previously denied, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the date it received the claim. VA encourages Vietnam Veterans with these three diseases to submit their applications for access to VA health care and compensation now so the agency can begin development of their claims. Read more at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1945>

Network News

Telehealth Update

VISN 23 continues to expand Telehealth services. The VISN is second in the nation in serving veterans with TeleMental Health programs. In 2010, over 9,800 Veterans have been served with the use of video Telehealth services. There is at least one TeleMental health clinic in most Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Soon two new TeleRetinal programs will go “mobile” in Nebraska Western Iowa and Iowa City offering diabetic retinal screening in local CBOC’s.

New Clinic to Open in Ramsey, Minnesota in 2011

Recently, the VA awarded a lease to open a VA-Staffed CBOC in Ramsey, MN, to PSD LLC, a Ramsey, MN based company. The lease is for 20,000 square feet of clinic space in a free-standing building located at the NE corner of Sapphire Street NW and Civic Center Drive in the 7400 block of Civic Center Drive, Ramsey, MN 55303. The lease, valued at \$9.95 million, is for a firm term of five years with options to extend up to a maximum of twenty years. Design and construction of clinic space will be complete in approximately 12 months. The clinic is expected to open in Late Summer/Early Fall 2011. The new clinic will provide primary care, mental health care, and other services including audiology, eye clinic, pharmacy and radiology.

Minneapolis VA Medical Center Designated as a Health Care System

Minneapolis VA facility is now known as the Minneapolis VA Health Care System (MVAHCS). This new designation more accurately reflects the numerous sites of care under the oversight of the parent organization. This new designation is exciting and further reflects VA’s commitment to providing care in the appropriate venue. Under this new designation, care is provided at the main Minneapolis campus, the Community-based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Maplewood, Hibbing, St. James, and Mankato with a new mega clinic scheduled to open in the summer of 2011 in Ramsey, MN. In Wisconsin, care is offered at CBOCs in Twin Ports (Superior), Rice Lake/Hayward, and Chippewa Falls. In addition, more CBOCs will open in the coming years.

VA NWIHCS Will Be on Facebook Soon

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) will launch a Facebook page soon. Look for a link to the Facebook page on www.nebraska.va.gov. For more information, contact Will Ackerman at (402) 995-4719.

Project to Build Apartment Building for Homeless Veterans in Omaha, Neb.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) held an information meeting Aug. 19 at the Omaha VA Medical Center for neighbors, businesses and others to share information about a joint project of the VA NWIHCS and Volunteers of America-Dakotas for a 100-unit apartment building offering homeless Veterans housing and assistance with finding employment. The new building is planned in midtown Omaha, and would be built by the VOA-Dakotas, a non-profit organization based in Sioux Falls, S.D. If approved, construction would start in 2011 and be completed within 12 to 16 months. The four story, 100,000 square foot building would have studio as well as one and two bedroom apartments. Housing would be mainly for homeless Veterans but also for other low-income Veterans. The building would include offices for counselors and case managers who could help Veterans find jobs and provide information on health care benefits. Funding for the project has not been set. The project must still be reviewed by the Omaha Planning Board. For more information, contact Will Ackerman at (402) 995-4719.



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Serving Those Returning From Combat

The Network takes a proactive approach on outreach to returning service members. As of July 31, 2010, the Network enrolled a total of 40,960 returning service members. Of those, 23,938 received outpatient services; 979 were treated as inpatients; and 16,043 chose to enroll only. If you would like to discuss ideas on how we can better serve those returning from combat, please contact the OEF/OIF Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center. The following tables show the number of Combat Veterans enrolled in this Network and where they are receiving care.

Combat Veterans Enrolled in VISN 23 Cumulative thru July 31, 2010				
Location	National Guard	Reserve	Active Duty	Totals
Black Hills	1039	47	1411	2497
Central Iowa	1812	296	1015	3123
Fargo	2463	204	960	3627
Iowa City	2614	611	720	3945
Minneapolis	7086	4226	2488	13800
NE/W Iowa	2881	1251	1656	5788
St. Cloud	2490	350	1480	4320
Sioux Falls	1322	202	2336	3860
VISN Total	21707	7187	12066	40960

Combat Veterans Care in VISN 23 Cumulative thru July 31, 2010				
Location	Outpatient	Inpatient	Enrolled	Total
Black Hills	2096	277	122	2497
Central Iowa	1861	26	1236	3123
Fargo	1633	23	1971	3627
Iowa City	2981	50	914	3945
Minneapolis	4671	268	8861	13800
NE/W Iowa	3359	49	2380	5788
St. Cloud	4137	150	33	4320
Sioux Falls	3200	136	524	3860
VISN Totals	23938	979	16043	40960

Research News

Minneapolis VA Study: Early Diagnosis Can Cut Alzheimer's Costs

Identifying dementia early can cut the cost of care by nearly 30 percent, a finding that may reduce the heavy financial burden of the disease on the health care system. Findings were announced at a national Alzheimer's Association meeting by Minneapolis VA Researcher Dr. Riley McCarten. McCarten said routine screening that identified patients with early signs of dementia helped cut average healthcare costs by nearly \$2,000 per patient in the first year, often by eliminating money spent on unnecessary tests and treatments. "That runs into billions of dollars we could potentially save," McCarten said.

Combat Veterans Face Reintegration Issues

A recently published study in Psychiatric Services by a MVAHCS research team headed by clinical psychologist Dr. Nina Sayer reported that 25 to 56 percent of combat veterans had "some" to "extreme" difficulty in social functioning following return to civilian life. The national study of 754 veterans indicated the need for more community and family-based programs to address the adjustment issues.

COPD Education Management Reduces Hospital Visits

Kathryn L Rice, MD, of the Minneapolis Pulmonary Section, is lead author of "Disease Management Program for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: A Randomized Controlled Trial" in the January 14, 2010 Respiratory and Clinical Care Medicine. The study determined whether a simplified disease management program reduces hospital admissions and emergency department (ED) visits due to COPD. Intervention group patients received a single 1-1.5 hour education session, an action plan for self-treatment of exacerbations, and monthly follow-up calls from a case manager.

Minneapolis Researcher Receives Lifetime Award

Karen H. Ashe, M.D., Ph.D., of VAMC's Geriatric Education, Research and Clinical Center (GRECC), was honored at the 2010 Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease (AAICAD) for her achievements in advancing Alzheimer's research with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Calendar of Events - September and October 2010

Sept. 14 – Women Veterans Focus Group – Holdrege, Neb.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) Women Veterans Program Manager will host a Women Veterans Health Care VA Focus Group meeting Sept. 14 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, 1118 Burlington Street, Holdrege, Neb. The meeting will provide attendees with information on services available for women Veterans. The Women Veterans Program Manager, Women Veterans Primary Care Providers and the OEF/OIF Team will be available to answer questions about VA Health Care. For more information, contact Cindy Niemack-Brown at 1-866-580-1810, Ext. 9-2287.

September 15 - Fargo VAMC Celebrates Grand Opening of Dickinson, North Dakota CBOC

The Fargo VA Medical Center (VAMC) is pleased to announce the opening of a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Dickinson, ND at 528 21st St. W., Suite F. The new 3,000 square foot facility has four examination rooms and a teleconferencing room for mental health and speech pathology. Services provided include basic primary care, flu shots, laboratory blood draws, prescriptions, and referrals for more serious issues. The clinic opens on September 15, 2010. Operating hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. A Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12, 2010, at the clinic. The program begins at 10 a.m. with the Ribbon Cutting at 10:45 a.m. Clinic tours will be provided until 1:00 p.m. For more information contact Peggy Wheelden, Public Affairs Officer, Fargo VAMC at 701-239-3724 or toll free at 1-800-410-9723 ext. 9-3724.

Sept. 24 and Sept. 25 –Veterans of Armed Forces Outreach Event in Stanton, Neb.

Representatives from the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) will host a Veterans Interagency Outreach Event Sept. 24 and Sept. 25 at the VFW Club, 1106 Veteran Avenue, Stanton, Neb. The outreach event includes information booths from the following Veteran agencies: NWIHCS Women's Health, Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom Returning Veterans Outreach Team, Lincoln VA Regional Office, Nebraska Transition Assistance Office, Lincoln/Omaha Vets Centers with their mobile Vet Center, local county Veterans service officers, and private Veterans agencies. For more information, contact Cindy Niemack-Brown at 1-866-580-1810, Ext. 9-2287.

October 15 - Women's Veteran Conference to be held in Sioux Falls

The Sioux Falls VAMC invites women Veterans of all eras to a Women's Veterans Conference to celebrate their contributions and sacrifices. Conference objectives are to expand staffs knowledge and understanding of the needs of women Veterans so we can better serve them, and provide women Veterans an opportunity to meet and socialize with other women Veterans. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For more information contact Charlotte McGrath, Women Veterans Program Manager, 605-336-3230, Ext. 7747.

Oct. 15-16 - Veterans of Armed Forces Outreach Event in Red Cloud, Neb.

Representatives from the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) will host a Veterans Interagency Outreach Event Oct. 15 and Oct. 16 at the Red Cloud Community Center at 142 West Third Avenue, Red Cloud, Neb. The outreach event includes information booths from the following Veteran agencies: NWIHCS Women's Health, Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom Returning Veterans Outreach Team, Lincoln VA Regional Office, Nebraska Transition Assistance Office, Lincoln/Omaha Vets Centers with their mobile Vet Center, local county Veterans service officers, and private Veterans agencies. For more information, contact Cindy Niemack-Brown at 1-866-580-1810, Ext. 9-2287.



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Oct. 19-20- Minnesota Hospice Veteran Partnership Conference in St. Cloud, MN.

All Minnesota CVSOs are invited to take part in a state-wide event bringing all community healthcare providers together, especially those serving rural areas. This is a “working conference” that will include education on various programs offered by VA and the community, as well as active participation by attendees to develop a plan for increased communication and collaboration. The purpose is to create a coalition of government and non-government organizations to ensure veterans and their families have access to appropriate high quality hospice and palliative care services. The conference is being held at the St. Cloud Civic Center, 10-4th Avenue South. For more information, contact Mike Jenkins at 701-239-3700 ext 9-4424.



5K Family “Fun Run, Walk & Roll”

Saturday, September 25, 2010

9 a.m. – ½ mile Fun Run for Kids

9:30 a.m. – 5K Wheelers, Runners and Walkers

Participants: VA staff, veterans, family members and general public.

Course: The certified 5-kilometer course starts and ends at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Cost: \$15 per entry (includes t-shirt). Fun-run is free; kids will receive awards.

Registration: Public Affairs Office, Minneapolis VAMC, One Veterans Drive, Minneapolis MN 55417.

Participants must register before September 10 to receive t-shirt.

Sponsors: Paralyzed Veterans of America and Minneapolis VA Medical Center

For more information: Ralph Heussner 612 467-3012 or Ralph.Heussner@va.gov

For More information, call the Network Office at (612) 725-1968 or
Log on at www.visn23.va.gov or email sharyl.schaepe@va.gov